

**Testimony in Support of
H.B. 6879, An Act Concerning Teacher Certification**

Erika Haynes, Director of Community Engagement
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Chairmen McCrory and Currey, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, and distinguished members of the Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of H.B. 6879, An Act Concerning Teacher Certification. My name is Erika Haynes, and I am the Director of Community Engagement for the School and State Finance Project.

It has been over two decades since Connecticut's system for preparing and certifying educators has been comprehensively reviewed. This means incoming candidates who want to become part of the educator workforce in Connecticut — a dire need given the state's current educator shortages — are operating under a framework that has not been substantially updated since before they were born.

Piecemeal changes to the system have only further tangled rules and processes, leading to even more confusion. What we have now is a complex, daunting, and expensive system that has not kept up with what we know today is needed to be an effective educator.

Now is the time to solve these problems in ways that build a robust, diverse, and effective educator workforce, and support our school systems to efficiently welcome and onboard candidates just starting their careers, looking to make a career change, or relocating to Connecticut. A modernized framework for educator preparation and certification — grounded in a commitment to educators as professionals and lifelong learners — will ensure every Connecticut student has access to the effective, diverse educators they need and deserve. Yes, there have been other efforts that have come and gone —but none have had the type of rigorous process, guardrails, or accountability measures laid out in H.B. 6879.

H.B. 6879 is the beginning of developing a vision for a modernized approach to preparing, recruiting, supporting, and retaining an effective educator workforce that emphasizes the knowledge, skills, and experiences students need to be prepared for 21st century study, work, and life. The proposed bill also recognizes the critical need for diversity in the educator profession amidst a rapidly diversifying student population.

Adopting recommendations of the Commission to Modernize the Educator Workforce, which will work to identify statutory and regulatory changes needed in order to make this vision a reality, will be key to accomplishing these goals. We see the Center for Public

Research and Leadership (CRPL), housed at Columbia Law School, as uniquely positioned to take on this work.

CPRL is led by professionals who bring legal, policy, educational, and change-management expertise. CPRL has developed close working relationships with key education, policy, nonprofit, and workforce leaders throughout the state over the past two years as facilitator of the CT Innovation Cohort. During this time, they have spoken to over 150 pre-service educators, teachers, and school- and system-level administrators to understand how the state's current approach to prep and certification pose a barrier to building and sustaining an effective and diverse workforce, and what features educators recommend should be present in a modernized statewide educator workforce strategy.

CPRL has a track-record of high-quality work products that are both rigorous, informed by effective practices across the country, and responsive to local and community needs. I believe CPRL has built the deepest understanding of the impact of Connecticut's current educator certification landscape on both pre-service educators and current teachers/administrators and will effectively guide the course of the teacher certification work.

H.B. 6879 poses not only an opportunity for Connecticut to reimagine the teaching profession, but an opportunity to lead the nation in transformative work. I strongly urge the Committee to support H.B. 6879 in order to continue best preparing educators for tomorrow's students.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 6879, and please feel free to contact me anytime should you have questions or would like to discuss this issue more.

Sincerely,

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About the School and State Finance Project

The School and State Finance Project is a nonpartisan, nonprofit policy organization that works collaboratively with policymakers, communities, and other key stakeholders to develop data-driven solutions that ensure all public school students receive equitable education funding that supports their learning needs.